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MODERN TRENDS IN SIAMESE CULTURE: RELIGION

A PART OF A DISSERTATION SUBMITTED TO THE FACULTY OF THE DIVISION OF THE HUMANITIES IN CANDIDACY FOR THE DEGREE OF DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

DEPARTMENT OF COMPARATIVE RELIGION
1938

By
KENNETH PERRY LANDON

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CHAPTER XI

RELIGIOUS TRENDS: CONTINUED

During the past century the Siamese religion has had to adjust itself to a changing world. Old values were weighed and judged against new ways of life. A sifting process began in which the essentials of Siamese thinking became apparent. In adjusting themselves to modern life, thinking Siamese discarded a great deal of mental baggage which had previously been considered essential for successful life. Foreign trade and international relations, Christian missions, and an ever-growing body of intelligentsia, were the main factors that called for a re-thinking of the Siamese way of life. All of these factors developed in importance since the middle of the nineteenth century.

Siam's international trade and the importance of the foreign trader in Siam has already been described. The foreigner in teak exporting, in tin mining, in railroad construction, in engineering projects, and in importing a steady stream of the products of a technological world, has made a great impression on Siamese people in every walk of life.

Siam's foreign relations made her abruptly conscious of the size of the world, of the smallness of Siam, of the ruthlessness of foreign powers, and of the potency of an army and a navy.

Christian missionaries spread out to every corner of the kingdom, establishing schools, hospitals, leper homes, and churches wherever they went. The impact of Christian missions upon Siamese life cannot be measured in terms of the numbers of converts. The work of missionaries called for a re-appraisal of many of the

fundamental ways of life. The practice of medicine alone was revolutionary. Surgery was an innovation. The old ideas of the content of the human body were questioned. With a new materia medica and a new theory of medicine the validity of charms and evil spirits was doubted.

Through the schools the missionaries influenced the lives of the young. In a land where the teacher is reverenced by his pupil the teaching missionary had a unique opportunity to impress his message. Classes in geography, science, history, ethics, and other subjects opened up totally new worlds. The scientific method of study was encouraged. Ideas incompatible with the new learning were cast in disrepute. What could the Siamese think of Mount Meru and the series of heavens and hells after studying the astronomers' heaven? A spirit of scepticism arose which questioned the existence of heavens, hells, and miracles, regardless of whether they were Buddhist or Christian. The value of charms was discounted. The teaching of agriculture called into question the swing and ploughing ceremonies. The conquests of Napoleon made the contribution of the white elephant cult seem unimportant.

Missionaries in churches, market places, and on street corners preached a message of mercy and the doctrine of helping one another. The idea of a saviour appealed to some. And with this teaching there came prison reform and mercy to such unfortunates as the lepers.

The ever-growing body of intelligentsia that was a product of the mission schools, of the government schools, and of schools abroad, set the pace of adjustment of an agricultural economy to a technological world. In 1932 they accelerated the process that was already in motion. In politics, economics, education, and every department of life, they have whipped up

the energy of the people with a constitution, plans, and definite projects.

A study of the dictionary alone would indicate what has been going on in Siam. New words have been coined, old words have been given new content of meaning, many have been recorded and countless numbers are waiting to enter the lists of new words in dictionaries to come. Life is lived with language, people talk about what they are doing and attempt to describe what they are thinking. The medical profession alone has created a new dictionary.

Buddhism is not compulsory on anyone in Siam except on the king who is the "Upholder of the Faith" and so must be a Buddhist. Chapter I, Section 4 says: "The King shall profess the Buddhist faith and is the upholder of religion." Chapter II, Section 13 says:

> Every person is entirely free to profess any religion or creed and to exercise the form of worship in accordance with his own belief, provided that it is not contrary to the duties of a national or to public order or to public morals.

H.S.H.Prince Varnvaidyakara, in 1933, surveyed Buddhism in Siam and recalled that when he was a child the temples were packed with old people, mostly women. These days when he goes to the temple he finds the same situation and so concludes that Buddhism is at least not losing ground. He pointed out that the Siamese gave liberally for meritorious works. Siamese in central Siam gave 7.5 percent of their total income. The north had an average gift ratio of 5.7 percent, the south 6.3 percent, and the east 4.9 percent. He was pleased with the average of giving to good works but expressed doubt whether the people who gave and who went to the temples were any better than the former generation. Referring to the old idea that church and state must be distinct he urges that religion must be an actual part of everyday life

in order to be vital. Otherwise, how can there be mercy and justice in the world?

At the end of Buddhist Lent, in 1937, the newspapers had pages of pictures showing the faithful taking their presents to the temples. Other pictures showed tens of thousands of people in boats and along the shores of streams during the festal season. The comment made was that here was evidence that the people retained a deep interest in Buddhism. The seasonal festivities yield much pleasure and satisfy the fun-loving nature of the Siamese.

Statistically the Buddhist Church shows very little fluctuation from year to year. From 1932 to 1937 about three hundred monasteries were added, making a total of 17,408 for all of Siam. Figuring that Siam has about fourteen and a half million people that allows one monastery to every eight hundred people, approximately. During the same period the number of priests rose about fifteen thousand to a total of 150,213. The numbers of novices and sisyas remained almost stable with 75,079 and 135,392 respectively.

A Siamese government official was asked as to the religious opinions of his co-workers. He said that a minority group were conservative in that they believed in the miraculous stories of tradition, heaven and hell. They believed in spirits and were patrons of the soothsayers. The majority group held to the same outward form of religion but actually believed only in the moral and ethical values. Both groups held the same golden rule that if you do good you receive good and if you do evil you receive evil. And both groups joined together to build a pavilion for a footprint of Buddha. In outward observance, in behavior, there seemed little distinction between them.

Going to Bangkok one day the writer met an old friend and talked with him about his religion. He was a well-educated Siamese. He had completed the secondary school work and had had special advanced courses to prepare him for his work. He was one of fourteen young men, one year, who took examinations for study in Europe at government expense. He alone was finally dropped from the eligible list. At the time he was very sorrowful but when he thought it over he was comforted by his religion. Heaven became the place where pure happiness could be found. He said that we build our heaven and hell with our own actions and so determine what manner of happiness or unhappiness we shall have. That there is a future heaven and hell is probable, but one need not wait for that time. We may build our own heaven now, so he thought. His favorite illustration of religious knowledge was that the understanding of religion was like the knowledge of a tree which is made up of bark, wood, and heart. Some people are able to understand all, from the heart out and some only get at the bark. Whatever they get is good if it helps them to be happy. As dinner was served he remarked that if he did anything wrong he asked forgiveness in advance. He then drank six brandies and ate a hearty dinner. Although intoxicated he was the perfect gentleman and soon went off to bed.

The living adherent to a religion is never a mirror of the ideal, but is a shadow of the ideal blanked out in shades of the culture of his day.

Luang Vichitr Vadhakarn wrote a book entitled Phutanuphap in an attempt to offset a modern tendency to accept the moral and ethical teaching of Buddha without yielding any personal religious loyalty to him.[1] The writer admits that the showing of reverence

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[1]Luang Vichitr Vadhakarn, Phutanuphap (2d ed.; Bangkok: Wiriyanuphap Press, 1931)

to both Dharma and Buddha is an old fashioned idea. However, he says that if one finds himself wandering out of the channel of truth it is wise to turn back into the true channel. In this case that is the reverence of Buddha. Buddha has been regarded as the most precious and unique individual, possessing an ability that exceeded that of mankind, indeed even exceeded the angels Indra and Brahm. Buddha has also been regarded as scarcely different from any other man except that he was a finer scholar than others. A third point of view is that there never was such a person as Buddha but that he was invented to authenticate a certain school of thought. Luang Vichitr dismisses the latter point of view. The second point of view is partially commended. The author returns to the first point of view and attempts to prove that Buddha was most unusual in that he had the power of working miracles. These miraculous works were threefold. The first works showed ability to divide the waters or to ride through the heavens on the wind. This showed that he controlled the elements of wind, water, earth, and fire. The second class of works proved his miraculous power to move the hearts of men. The third class of miraculous works were his doctrines or teaching. Luang Vichitr says that the latter two classes of miracles are accepted by all Buddhists. He then attempts to show that there are good grounds to accept the miracles over the elements also. This sort of miracle was necessary to defeat competitors who might win the devotion of the people. People were accustomed to teachers who could do remarkable tricks. Thus the Yogi in India could control the four elements of earth, water, wind, and fire. He could make the earth to open, the water to separate, the wind to blow and to carry him on its back, or the fire to spring up. The Buddha had to defeat all competitors to win and hold the devotion of the people and to

get these other clever ones to own him as their leader. The final chapter discusses the possible return of the Buddha to this world. This parallels the second coming of Christ. The theory was that the original elements of the Buddha would, in the end of time, reform into the Buddha again. This rests on the theory that the entering of Nirvana was threefold. The first was when the passions entered Nirvana at enlightenment, the second was when the Buddha was eighty years of age and entered Nirvana, and the third is this final entering of the primary bodily elements of Buddha. Luang Vichitr offers a powerful, capable Buddha to the people for reverence and suggests that if they are willing to accept the Dharma they should also accept the Buddha.

In 1935, a corroboration of this conservative point of view was given by a Pali scholar of the sixth grade named Nai Pui Saeng Chai.[1] The subject matter was descriptive of hell, heaven, and the place of mankind in the eternal scheme. The writer makes the statement that if this teaching is abandoned Buddhism cannot stand. He says that the lower class people are restrained from sin by their fear of hell. Middle class people with some education are saved from sin and won to do good by their desire for heaven. The choicest element of mankind is held to the true course by their search for nirvana. When these three fundamentals have their proper place in social thinking then it may be guaranteed that the world will progress and be a quiet, peaceful place without injustice. Also it will be easier for the government. In his statements, which received the approval of the Prince Patriarch of the Order in Siam, it is seen that even in modern times the common people fear hell and hope to win heaven.

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[1]Pui Saeng Chai, Phutaprachaya (Bangkok: Supa Akson Press, 1935)

Another very interesting volume, published in 1937, by Phra Mahachot reaffirms ancient practices.[1] It is a book on meditation and mystic control of the heart and so of the elements of the body, and finally of the elements around one. A master in this technique can control disease by directing the bodily elements. The author claims that his teaching is in perfect accord with Buddhism and has assisted many individuals to a better understanding of the dharma. The actual subject matter is a collection of centuries of lore from the life history of the Thai. Some of it was collected from Ubon, some from Nakon Wiengcan, some from Lopburi, some from the Ayuthian period and some from the Bangkok era. The purpose is to help monks get that intuitive enlightenment that comes from meditation, properly directed.

There has been some talk of eliminating obsolete ceremonies which no longer service the needs of the people. For instance it was thought that the ploughing ceremony should be discontinued because it is no longer a satisfactory technique for determining the rainfall and the quality of the crop for the new year. Modern agricultural methods, the Weather Bureau, and the Department of Agriculture more than replace the practical values once found in the old ceremony. However, it is carried on season by season because it is an ancient ceremony which yields satisfaction to the older generation and because it gives pleasure and fun to the crowds that go to watch.

Newspaper discussion recalled the innovations made by King Amanullah with disastrous results. The general opinion was that ancient Siamese customs and ceremonies should be changed slowly. Many of the old ceremonies such as the swing ceremony or the water throwing ceremony might be continued as a picturesque

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[1]Phramaha Chot, Samata Wipasana Baep Boran, (Bangkok: Akson Caroen That Press, 1937)

custom.

There are two Buddhist sects in Siam, the Maha Nikaya and the Dharmayuttika. The latter was a reform movement started by King Mongkut. Today the clearest distinguishing mark between the two sects is a slight variation in the way the robe is worn.

Siam is not like China or Japan in having strong religious sects. No great religious movement is caught up in a name symbolizing a sentiment of the people. Such a movement as the Pure Land School of China, headed by venerable Yin Kuang, with its emphasis on faith as the one vital thing, is not duplicated in Siam. The feeling may be there but there is no movement to make it vocal. The Mi-Tsung School of Mysteries which is lead by T'ai Hsu and which specializes on the practices and formulae of chanting charms is found in Tibet, China, and Japan, but not in Siam in any formal way although many people will risk their lives on a magic formula. The ascetics in the Chinese Chan or the Japanese Zen who lean toward meditation as a speciality are not duplicated in any movement of importance in Siam. Here again there are individuals who meditate. There is even an attempt to open a refuge for meditation at Chaiya. But there is no formal movement or sect. The Chinese intelligentsia that cluster around an idealistic-philosophical school called Wei-Sih doubtless find individuals in Siam who would approve, but there is no school of thought to represent this position. The ways of Hinayanists are not the ways of Mahayanists. In Siam the intelligentsia have neither departed from Buddhism nor started sectional movements within the fold. The traditional pattern is maintained on the outside.

This question has come up with leading Buddhists in conversations about religion. They admit, for instance, that many prominent priests do not believe the various miraculous narratives.

Yet these priests continue to preach as they have always done because they have such high respect for the religion.

Siamese, by nature, are a quiet people. The idea of mass movements against authority seems foreign to their nature. This quietness has probably been produced by Buddhism. A very noticeable thing about large gatherings of Siamese is their orderliness and good manners. An unruly mob of Siamese is difficult to imagine although some individuals in a crowd might be noisy. To imagine them, as an American crowd, bursting out upon the playing field to tear up football goalposts is almost impossible. Even the Siamese revolution was neat and orderly. This spirit carries on in religion. Buddhism is the official religion in the country although there is religious tolerance. Siamese have expressed the sentiment that anyone having advanced views at a tangent with traditional Buddhism, could still think and believe as he pleased within the church. Orthodoxy is more a matter of behavior than a matter of belief. Even if radically new views should be developed the traditional outward pattern could probably be retained. Even the slight apparent division in the Buddhist front seen in the existing two sects, which are hardly distinguishable, is occasionally lamented.

During the early days of the constitutional form of government a monk made an innovation in his sermon by saying that in Siam there are now four rather than three refuges. Formerly there was the Buddha, the Scriptures, and the Order. To these have been added the Constitution. This angered many people, even those who loved the constitution.

It might be wondered why Chinese influence has not extended to Buddhism and so drawn the Siamese out along various lines of thought. It may have been because the Chinese that came to

Siam were of the peasant and merchant class. Few if any Chinese scholars have made Siam their home. Another reason is that the Chinese are regarded as the servants of Siam and so their religion or philosophy, even if expressed, would have little influence.

From 1932 to 1937 the Annamites maintained nine monasteries and the Chinese six. The priests for both Annamites and Chinese remained between forty and fifty year after year. Chinese Buddhism is at a standstill in Siam. There is no tendency to spread or to win Siamese adherence.

Siamese Buddhism grows to match the normal expansion of the population. In 1929-30 there were 197 Pali schools with 7,846 students. There were also 2,195 theological schools with 38,434 students. In 1933-34 there were 284 Pali schools with 8,954 students, and 2,935 theological schools with 55,547 students. The latest statistics for 1936-37 show that there are 391 Pali schools with 9,551 students, and 4,056 theological schools with 69,357 students. In seven years the number of Pali schools had doubled but the actual student body had increased but one fifth. Theological schools had almost doubled in number and the students had been but a few thousand short of doubling their numbers. This indicates a thriving interest in Buddhist theology with a desire to get a scholarly foundation in religion. The most spectacular growth has come since the constitutional form of government was inaugurated.

The government of the church is orderly and is patterned after the political divisions in that there are three large divisions which are subdivided to agree with the governmental divisions into Cangwat and Amphoe. The Prince Patriarch is the executive head of the Order.

At the time of the revolution in 1932, novices and monks

became excited over the idea of a constitution for the temples. One was drawn up with the suggestion that they too should have their liberty and freedom. The rulers of temples should all be under a constitution even as the king.

The new political ideas penetrated into the temple grounds in spite of the efforts of leaders to keep the temples a place of quiet, cut off from worldly affairs. Novices and young monks were sometimes requested not to leave the temple grounds. But the roads of Bangkok were well-dotted with the yellow robes during the exciting days. Some temples forbad discussions of political subjects. Some people wanted a democratic form of government in the temples. To this some of the head priests agreed. Many more objected. Even the children in school expressed themselves and in one temple school the pupils went on a strike because they felt they were unjustly treated.

Articles in newspapers mentioned abuses in temple government as a reason for reform. There is no continuity throughout Siam because some temples have one man to govern and some have a committee. Some monks eat rice in the evening contrary to rules, some have bird fights for sport, some smoke opium, some use the drug Indian hemp. Suggestions were made that there be fewer temples with higher standards and that all of them be governed by the committee system.[1]

Another article suggests that boys that are too young and men that are too old or are physically infirm should not be permitted to enter the Order. The practical suggestion was also made that every monk and novice be required to carry a passport. If anyone misbehaved the authorities could easily trace him.[2]

The chief income of the monks is from "kan nimon" or

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[1] Thai Mai, June 27, 1933. [2] Ibid., January 5, 1933.

from invitations to render religious service at a wedding or a funeral. The head monk collects and spends the money in most temples. Critical articles have been written claiming that the funds were dispensed, too often, for the comfort of the head monk or his relatives.

In answer to criticisms there was published, in 1934-35, a book by Nai Sridharma which defended the established and customary method of carrying on the business of the Order.[1] Authority rests in the High Priest. The power that authenticates this authority rests in the monks themselves. The book admits that the government of a religious body takes on the coloring of the political government because both are expressions of the same people. Three words popular in modern Siam are lifted into the religious setting and are shown to fit the religious scheme. The words are freedom, equality, and brotherhood. It is claimed that the Buddhist Order already has these qualities, and so no governmental revolution within the religious body is necessary.

A Buddhist lawyer interested himself in the question of Buddhist government. He felt that no change was necessary because government was not as arbitrary as some critics claimed. He said that the usual method was to call a meeting of the leading monks if there was a question of discipline, building, or extraordinary expenditure. He agreed, however, that the education of monks was at a low ebb and needed to be radically improved.

It is doubtless true that there are many ignorant, incapable, too young or too old, members of the Buddhist Order. Some monks have become wealthy and have provided for families. Some have become involved in activities that are not usually

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[1]Nai Siridharma, Kan Pokkhrong Khna Song (Bangkok: Supa Akson Press, 1934-35)

considered religious. The monks seldom leave the temple to propagate their religion.

The People's Assembly discussed the Buddhist Order a couple of times in 1937 with the thought of modernizing it in order to improve the teaching given the people. One representative asked that trained monks be sent out on speaking tours of several months duration through the country districts.[1] Another representative asked about permitting monks to practice medicine of the Siamese variety. The Minister of the Interior answered that they are not allowed to practice. Monks who act as doctors neglect their duties as monks and fail to study and improve themselves. From time immemorial the monk was the family doctor. In the modern world he has lost his function as healer. In the chapter on education it was shown that the monk is losing his position as school teacher. He is thus being fashioned into a religious specialist and as such he must acquire higher religious learning or lose the respect of the people.

It should not be thought that all monks are ignorant. There are many well-educated and brilliant men in the organization. But, a highly educated religious body is almost impossible for the nation as a whole is still struggling with the problem of primary education. Monks are expected to study and are given annual examinations. In 1934-35 there were 49,064 monks who took examinations. Of this number 16,928 were successful. Of the 8,176 theological students who took examinations 2,724 passed either the first or second degree. Pali students also had a low passing average for out of 2,771 who were examined only 790 passed. In the final ceremonies three monks received the highest or ninth degree in Pali study, and forty-two received the sixth degree.

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[1] *Nation*, December 19, 1936.

The old way of teaching Buddhism to children is shown in a pamphlet published in 1929-30 entitled Baep Wai Phra Suatmon. The preface admits that the book is difficult for almost every other sentence is written in Pali. The explanation is made that this was done to teach the children new words and new ideas. The child mind has to fall down in protest or else learn strange sounds with no meaning.

A newspaper article laments that since the world war there has been a tendency to discard religion. The younger generation are accused of growing up without any religion but the blame is put on the parents who are urged to lead their children to the temples. Parents should show the values of religion in their own lives and so make religion attractive to the young. The old way of telling them that if they do evil they will go to hell and if they make merit they will go to heaven is disgusting and should be stopped. The positive spiritual values of religion should be made clear so that once again religion will be attractive and vital.[1]

Another article says that the young people tend to be irreligious. Many parents never tell their children about Buddha and his teaching. The children often learn nothing about Buddha until they are grown up. When they do go to the temple they fail to understand the ceremonies. The article concludes with a description of the ideal parents who teach their children and the ideal son who is clever, whose language is worthy, who is good-hearted, who has the heart of a monk and never loses his temper, who is never jealous and has no enemies. How familiar these words sound. The story is always the same of the irreligious youth, the neglectful parents, the perfect example if only. . . .[2]

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[1] Nation, December 10, 1936. [2] Ibid., December 31, 1936.

Phramaha Khumsaen addressed an assembly of teachers at Chiengmai on June 14, 1933. He spoke on the profit of increasing religious knowledge. He recalled his own experience of learning grade by grade. At each grade he thought that one more grade would teach him all he needed to know. The more he learned the more he realized he did not know. One who falls into a well feels that he has too much water. If he comes out and falls into the ocean he realizes how much water there is in the world. He taught that education bears knowledge, knowledge bears work, work bears wealth, and wealth bears happiness. The root of happiness is in knowing as much as one can. Wealth is not defined in terms of money or possessions but as an inner wealth of character, of the spirit. The speaker urged young people to learn as much as they could.

The community values of Buddhism were outlined for children as sixfold.[1] The six to be reverenced are parents, teacher, marriage partner, friend, servant, and monk. The young people are urged to be on good terms with these people who direct the life of the community. Obedience, faithfulness, patience, kindness, helpfulness, and other values of community life are explained. The life of the community depends on the perpetuation of these values, and these values depend on the life of the community.

King Prajadhipok expressed his opinion as to the essentials of Buddhism for young people as follows.[2] Everyone should be made to realize that what he is and becomes depends upon himself and nobody else. When one does good he receives good, and when he

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[1]Phra Rachaniphon Khamnam, Thit Hok (Bangkok: Sophon Phiphatanakorn Press, 1932-33)

[2]Princess Phun Phitsmai, Satsnakhun (Bangkok: Sophon Phiphatanakorn Press, 1929-30)

does evil he receives evil, not only in this life but in the rebirth existences of the future. This is the mainspring of religion and the basis for morals and character. The idea of the children having faith is stressed. Respect for the Buddha, the Scriptures, and the Order must be inculcated even though the children do not understand why. Karma and rebirth cannot be demonstrated but must be accepted on faith. His Majesty says nothing of heaven, hell, or nirvana.

Princess Phun, in the body of the above pamphlet, suggests that everyone should have an image of Buddha in the home to reverence, not as a god but as a wise teacher. Everyone should determine to follow Buddha's example and do good.

She then teaches that we should do unto others as we would have others do unto us. The things we dislike other people also dislike. Her teaching parallels the Christian doctrine.

One who thinks more of others than of himself is a true Buddhist. Buddha did not spare himself in order to teach others. The doctrine is written in all of life. At the movies the hero is loved and the villain is hated. This is because the hero is good and the villain is evil. Everyone really likes good and hates evil. She concludes the chapter by paralleling the Christian teaching that to him who knoweth to do good and doeth it not, to him it is sin.

Of the monks, she says that they are men who have left home and family and worldly riches in order to carry the teaching of Buddha to everyone. So, they should be honored.

The low person is one who has no religion for religion shows what is good and what is evil. Young people should read and study religious subjects and attend the temple. Respect is shown the Buddha by having a good image of him. Respect is shown the

Scriptures by reading them. Respect is shown the monks by supporting them.

A letter from Princess Phun dated May 1937, adds the thought that failure in religion is not a failure of the religion but of those who use it. The essence of religion is to help oneself and others to find happiness in this world.

It is worth noticing that the pamphlet of Princess Phun says nothing about heaven, hell, or nirvana, nor are any miracles described. The stress is on moral character and doing good. The reward is a happy life.

Dissatisfaction with the religious teaching given young Siamese was expressed by Phya Sritammarat in conversation with the writer. In an article to a school magazine he outlined four rules of progress for the young.[1] They should be given a deep interest in religion, they should put forth an earnest effort into definite projects, and they should weigh cause and effect. "Conquer yourself and win," is his concluding advice. He feels that religion is not something static. Religion changes with knowledge and science but retains its service as an anchor to morals and character. The good life that is sought must be sought by each one alone. It is not a gift. The elders and religious teachers are purely advisory in capacity.

An attempt has been made to start religious youth movements, but without any great success. Soon after the revolution in 1932, three organizations were encouraged into activity. One was the Smakhom Phutthamamaka, another was the Smakhom Yuaphutthasasanik, the third was a more scholarly movement called Smakhom Parien. This latter organization hoped to raise the educational standards of the leading monks and to make all monks more worthy

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[1]Phya Sritammarat, "Ithibat Si," Mahawachirawut, 1936-37.

of respect.

Occasional newspaper articles lament the failure of these or any other movement to reach the young people with religion. It is true that they have accomplished little although the very formulation of a group shows a possible development. On the writer's desk is a letter from a friend at Chaiya who has founded a Buddhist missionary school called Buddhanigama. He says:

> Buddhist education in Siam is of the old type. But we are trying to have boys lead a perfect life free from drugs, cigars, betel-nut chewing,etc. . . . . the goal is perfect life, here and now in this world today.

A government official in Bangkok confirmed the suspicion that religious youth movements in Siam are still a matter of name rather than of fact.

In literature a number of things are being done to make religion more available. For instance, the Siamese have never had their bible in their own language. It has always been in Pali and the only people who could read it were the professional monks. There has been some discussion about it in the newspapers since 1935. It was reported that the Fine Arts Department had recommended to the Ministry of Public Instruction that the production of the scriptures in Siamese should be accomplished. Perhaps this would do for Siam what the Wycliffe Bible did for England.

In 1934 the old Buddhist magazine Dharmacaksu was revived. At one time it was the official organ of Siamese Buddhism. After years of failure it is now brought to life again with the idea of popularizing Buddhism with the people who cannot read Pali but who want to know the teaching of the Buddha and the progress of the church. Its stress is "back to Buddha" and its teaching is pristine Hinayana Buddhism.

A number of books have been published in the last five years which are either translations of books written by foreigners

or are founded on some particular line of thought found in such a volume. Actually they are few in number as compared to books of a similar nature listed in the catalogue of a Chinese book firm. Too few translations into Siamese have been made. Many Siamese realize the lack and more of them are turning to the production of books.

The propagation of the Buddhist religion and all missionary activities have been in a state of pause. So much so that Siamese themselves frequently comment on the static situation in their religion. King Prajadhipok himself once remarked in the introduction to a pamphlet entitled Phutthamamaka, published in 1928-29, that Buddhist missionary effort was at a standstill.[1]

Three years later an Italian Buddhist monk startled the country with the proposition that he lead a mission of monks from Siam to Rome which would have as its object the conversion of others to Buddhism. The doctrine that most people remembered was that they should eat vegetables and no meat. He counted his converts carefully and announced in the press each additional hundred that he won. By the month of January 1934, he had sixty-four monks signed up for his pilgrimage. The king granted a sum of money to the project and limited the number of monks to a hundred. Monks enrolled from all over the country. The Italian, Phra Lokanat, gave an address at Chulalongkorn University in which he declared that Buddhism would end all wars. He intended to preach Buddhism until wars were forever ended. He suggested that poverty was an aid to righteousness. The pilgrims set out for Burma and soon found themselves in difficulty. By April it was reported that over twenty monks had left the Italian leader and

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[1]Krom Phya Wachirayan Warorot, Phutthamamaka, (Bangkok: Sophon Phiphatanakon Press, 1928-29)

were considering a return to Siam. A letter from the Italian to Nai Chong Chai Bhakdi hinted at the difficulty:

> We are all well and happy . . . . external jungles are nothing. The worst jungle is the jungle that each one finds in his own heart, the jungle of ignorance. We have seen no tigers. The worst are the internal tigers, the Raga passion which continually crucifies humanity.
>
> I always forget and forgive, because I always overflow with gratitude and appreciation. I have absolutely no enemy in the whole world. To be angry at nothing is the height of foolishness. . . . .
>
> I can cure Sugata's baby mind and can change him into a real lion if he always stays with me. So please tell him to stay with me and not to spend all his time playing with my Secretary. I believe that he will become more serious as time goes on and he will eventually become a great man if he stays always with me. . . . .
>
> Please tell Nai Chawerlit Apaiwongse that he has given me the highest happiness in taking his solemn vow to refrain from cock-fighting forever.[1]

Siamese monks began to drift back into Siam and at last there were only thirteen who stayed with their leader. The Italian felt that these thirteen lion-hearted ones would make religious history. Of the forty or more monks that had returned to Siam not one had given a public explanation. In June the secretary of the pilgrimage wrote back to say that those who left the group had been disciplined for quarreling, fighting, stealing, and slander.[2] Foreign mission work did not progress under Phra Lokanat. As far as the writer knows there are no Siamese inspired missionary efforts to other peoples.

In this scientific age many writers suggest that there is no conflict between science and religion, in this case Buddhism. Every religion has had to resort to considerable rationalization in order to reconcile anachronistic religious thinking with the modern world. Buddhism is no exception. The usual Buddhist solution is to explain that both science and Buddhism are rational and intelligent and that Buddhism supplies what science lacks in

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[1] Bangkok Times, April 21, 1934. [2] Ibid., June 23, 1934.

ethics and morals.

A new Buddhist catechism, prepared by a European and printed in both Siamese and English in Bangkok, has met with much approval.[1] The preface says, "This catechism has been prepared with the utmost care, and deals only with the original word of the Buddha, as it has been handed down to us in the Sutta-Pittaka of the Pali canon." He expresses thanks to two Siamese who assisted in the production of the book and remarked:

> Both of them expressed the hope that it might be of benefit to the new generation who is at the present time putting too much faith and hope in science and civilization, i.e., in the modern materialism of the West, whilst on the other side is neglecting to cultivate the heart through the true and practical religion of the Buddha.[2]

He criticizes the monks for living in large temples in the cities because in Buddha's time they lived in the forest. He says they are too attached to worldly ways. They are fond of society, idle talk, and a comfortable life. He gives as a reason that they lack general education, possess insufficient knowledge of the Buddha's deep philosophy and of comparative science of religion. The order of the monks retains only the form, not the spirit of the movement. As soon as general education and modern science have, as in the West, penetrated the broad masses, then the Eastern nations may take up again the high aim and ideal of a new Buddhist life and culture. The change is to come within Buddhism by a return to the original teaching interpreted in terms of the best scientific thinking.[3]

A monk named Phramaha Thong Su³p who had studied Buddhism for over twenty years and attained to the highest or ninth grade states that Buddha was a man and no god. He also claims that his

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[1] Bhikkhu Khemo Navayanist, New Buddhist Catechism (Bangkok: Krungdebarnagar Press, 1936)

[2] Ibid., p. iv. [3] Ibid., pp. 94-98.

teaching is not a religion but is a way of living. He evidently thinks of religion as something theological.[1] He claims that there is nothing in Buddhism that needs revising unless it be the customs and traditions that have grown up around it. These need to be revised to suit the times. He feels that there is more real interest in Buddhism than there was at any time in the previous ten years. Newspapers regularly carry topics of discussion on some aspect of Buddhism.

At the time of the Visakha Buja, the day when the birth, enlightenment, and death of Buddha are celebrated, a representative of the Buddha Dharma Society, Luang Rajtakar Kosala, presented what he considered to be modern Buddhism. He said:

> Buddha, the founder of Buddhism, was a mortal man of brilliant intellect.
>
> Buddha's teaching is based on one's own actions. If one wishes to obtain happiness, one must act for one's own benefit. No prayer or confession can be relied upon, and no God to help. Buddha is a scientist, his conception of psychology is superb. His theory of life stands the test of modern science. Buddha was a great social reformer, there being no distinction of caste or creed when entering the Order, all being equal. His rules for disciples remain unaltered to the present day, though provision to do so was allowed on the resolution of the members, a proof of his teachings being adaptable to all periods of time.
>
> His teaching are: first, not to commit sinful actions; second, to do good; and third, to make one's mind pure. These in brief are the main principles of the Buddha's teaching.[2]

Buddha is thus transformed into a scientist, a psychologist, as well as a social reformer.

A medical man, Dr. Luang Suriyabongs, spent three and a half months as a monk and then described what he felt to be the essentials of Buddhism.[3] He learned a few Pali prayers but took little interest in the rites and ceremonies which in his opinion

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[1]Siam Chronicle, May 24, 1937. [2]Nation, October 3, 1936.

[3]Luang Suriyabongs, The Buddha's Doctrine of Truth (Bangkok: Krungdebarnagar Press, 1936)

had nothing to do with Buddhism as taught by the Buddha himself. He feels that mankind is deeply involved in materialism. Life is everywhere a struggle for wealth and power. Even science has been abused to satisfy mankind's greed for pleasure, wealth, and power. The poor accuse the rich of exploiting them, and the rich are dissatisfied with the poor who want more money and less work. Both are wrong, they suffer alike from materialism. Although science has led to marvelous inventions and has made life more agreeable, it has failed to develop man's mind to higher ideals and to finer culture. It has failed to make man happier. Man has begun to doubt the value of science. Cultural education is needed. People need more leisure for self-contemplation and ethical development. To the vast majority Buddhism has become a cult full of Brahman ceremonies, a venerable tradition. With the education of the people this half-blind belief will be gradually destroyed. There is a great danger that the pious may fall prey to extreme materialism unless steps are taken to enlighten their minds.

The general trend is "back to Buddha." Miracles, heaven, hell, and nirvana, interest thinking people less and less.

The idea that nirvana is something to receive after death is objectionable to many people. The Nation had a series of discussions on this subject running through the month of May 1933. Nirvana was defined as the highest good, the highest ethic of Buddhism. It is admitted that the usual definition is that it is annihilation of the whole being. One is snuffed out as a flame. The claim is made that Buddha was teaching the annihilation of his evil passions and not of himself or anybody else. Complete control of passion and desire was the goal. The question is asked how one can attain to nirvana while yet alive if nirvana

means physical annihilation. Buddha attained nirvana before his death when he conquered himself. The final paper in the series suggests that knowledge and love are the foundations of Buddhism. Without these one cannot hope to attain to nirvana. Love is love of family, of nation and of the world. The poor, the lowly, and even the animals can learn and love.

H.S.H. Prince Sakol Varavarn discussed the subject, "What is Good?" before the Teachers' Association. He sought the highest good for which mankind should strive. Becoming a priest or losing oneself in a hobby is no guarantee that good will be found. Instinct, experience, and nature are considered as means to discover the ideal goal. Something that is good for all is a higher good than one that is good for some and not for others. Peace and love between individuals and nations is finally selected as the ideal goal.

The Premier, Phya Bahol Balabayuha, spoke over the radio on the subject of peace.[1] He recalled that both Rome and Ayudhya fell because the people were selfish, lazy, and pleasure-seeking. The people must know the Dharma if they would progress. By following it the citizens are law abiding and hard working, the soldiers are brave and kind, the governors are just and generous, the judges are impartial and honest, the officials industrious and sincere, the merchants fair and reasonable, the princes act with dignity and kindness, and the monks lead the people in paths of righteousness. To him the Dharma, the doctrine of Buddha, was the cure-all for the nations ills.

The characteristics to be avoided and the virtues to be sought in these modern times were detailed by Phya Bahol in an address to the students and faculty of the University of Moral

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[1]Siam Chronicle, June 25, 1937.

and Political Science on June 6, 1937. The teaching of the Dharma will eradicate the evils and encourage the growth of the virtues he outlines. The evils are:

1. Greedy for personal profit at the expense of others.
2. Revengeful.
3. Easily angered.
4. Holding a grudge.
5. Ignoring the good of others and erasing their meritorious acts.
6. Regarding oneself better than others.
7. Jealous disposition.
8. Miserly.
9. Swindling and deceiving others.
10. Bragging.
11. Unpleasantly stubborn.
12. Always showing a competitive spirit and wanting to be the winner.
13. Proud.
14. Haughty.
15. Taking intoxicants.
16. Despising others.

The list of virtues were but half the number:

1. Intelligently generous.
2. Thinking before speaking or acting.
3. Ashamed to do wrong.
4. Able to endure and be content in any situation.
5. Honest and humble.
6. Grateful to one another.
7. Merciful, showing grace.
8. Doing everything from the heart.

These virtues and vices are not the traditional items in Buddhist thinking nor are they out of accord with the customary standards. They are a revised version to suit the times.

To match these values is the new national spirit such as shown in an article encouraging martial spirit.[1] Fear is expressed for Siam's future unless the people can be won to the desired attitude. Three Siamese poems are cited to explain exactly what is required. The first says that if anyone attacks the Thai borders, the Thai will sacrifice all flesh and blood if only at last they might have honor. The second hymn asks when we must face death. The Thai meet death, but death is only death and so fight bravely. The third hymn concludes that if Siam is firmly established the Thai are assured existence. If Siam is destroyed can the Thai live? They are as moths, a race dissolved in a moment of time.

Silver and gold pins have been widely sold bearing the inscription, "Love your race more than life." It sets the pace for the spirit that Siam's leaders would like to see come alive.

Several pieces of Siamese poetry show something of this same feeling in sports and sickness.[2] The first song was produced while sick, so the author said. The attitude taken was that sickness was not an unusual experience and so "do not complain." Another song was sung at a sports meet and the theme was to be a good sport, win or lose. Another song encouraged the players to seek goals beyond the sports themselves. Sports should perpetuate the ancient standards of race, honor, and manhood. The idea of trying and trying and never giving up was

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[1] Nai Tung Khamni, "Kan Chai Ni Chat," Pattanisan, 1936-37, pp. 48-55.

[2] "Pakinnakapasit," Mahawachirawut, 1936-37, pp. 62-65.

the theme. The final song confirms the old Buddhist teaching that each must depend on himself alone. No one can borrow the nose of another for smelling.

The old Siamese way of life resolved itself around the temple. The temple was the place of education and study. It was the local dispensary of medicine. It was the village club where social life eddied. In the evening its grounds were ideal for a place to meet friends and chat. It was the place where marriages were made. Love matches were struck up when the families went to make merit and the young people had an opportunity to meet. It was the one place where everyone dressed in his best clothes and so was the place where style and clothing were compared and improved. So too handwork and the fruits of agriculture were brought in to form an unconscious show which resulted in the improvement of the products. The modern way of life has been stripping the temple of its vital functions, one by one, until only the religious in a narrow sense of the word is left.

While in Bangkok in June 1937, the writer was impressed with the opinion of a Siamese who has been influential as an advisor to the constitutional government. He felt that old Siam was being transformed, not without loss. A questioning of the value of the order of monks has upset a tradition centuries old whereby every male became a monk for at least a short period. The idea of heaven, hell, and nirvana, does not interest the young people. They realize they cannot attain a Utopia, but they do desire to improve their present situation. Many young Siamese are non-religious. That is they are not interested in any religion in particular but are willing to tolerate all religions for other people. He summarized by saying that the uneducated will probably continue to make Buddhism theistic in form, the

intellectuals will continue to regard it as a code of ethics for behavior that guarantees the maximum of peace and satisfaction to the most people. Those who are with no social or religious interest will probably pass out of the picture for they are never very strong.

In summarizing the religion of the Siamese in modern times it must be asked what their attitude is toward the world in which they live, what they want in life, and what means they are using to get what they want.

The old world which centered around Mount Meru has been swallowed up in the astronomers' heaven. Modern Siamese may well feel that the universe is eternal although cast in a pattern far different from the one imagined by their ancestors. If their minds cast back to a beginningless point they alight not on an everlasting creator but on an everlasting universe which has been the womb of all that is. The present life has great significance for it is the only one that is certain to be lived. The location of heaven and hell in the astronomers' universe becomes a dubious matter. And nirvana or extinction, what is that? Perhaps all mankind is extinguished at death anyway. So nirvana or victory over self must be sought in the present life.

Desire drives have remained the same in that people still want food, home, sex satisfaction, children, security, pleasure, and recognition. But the desires are expressed in a more complicated manner than ever before.

Looking back at the first chapter we see that there are men out of work, perhaps for the first time in the history of Siam. No government has ever had to deal with this problem. There are strong, intelligent young men who wish to have an important place in the political life of the nation. There are

people who feel themselves unjustly taxed and who look for some instrument to express their dissatisfaction. There are people in debt who wish to make a fresh start. There is a desire to make all men equal, to obliterate class distinction, titles, and high language. These desires and many more turned to revolution as a weapon that offered a ready solution.

There is desire for rule by the peoples' representatives and so a constitution is evolved to guarantee the new party the power of control for at least ten years while at the same time gradually allowing the masses of people more privilege of expression. The people are put into the business of city sanitation, garbage disposal, fire fighting, city water, city roads and other projects. New desires have called forth new instruments.

The old desire for national security remains and is expressed in terms of a strengthening of the army and navy. Friendship with all nations is reaffirmed. New political treaties are negotiated. A new military spirit is inculcated in the youth.

Turning to the third chapter there is express desire to improve the economic status of everyone. A Ministry of Economic Affairs is brought into being which engages experts and in a modern way attacks the economic problems of the nation. Trade is encouraged by chambers of commerce. Dealing in fraudulent products is severely punished. There is desire to know where the nation stands without any guesswork and so a census is taken. There is desire for adequate income from tin production and so Siam becomes a member of the tin agreements. The peasants want capital funds to help them enlarge and improve rice cultivation and so the cooperative society plan is stressed. Better rice is obtained by improved methods of irrigation and fertilizing. There is desire to put more Siamese into commerce and trade and

so trade and craft schools are brought into being.

In chapter four it was seen that the desire was to include all nationalities dwelling in Siam in a closer union. It is desired that everyone shall be equally well-prepared to meet the new standards of life. The Malays and Chinese, in particular must be educated to the Siamese way of life. Immigration is decelerated and compulsory becomes more rigid. The Bangkok language and way of doing things is propagated in every remote part of the kingdom.

In chapter five desire was expressed to have an intelligent and educated nation. Primary education is set as a minimum goal for everyone. There is desire for trained leaders and so the university and foreign study is encouraged. It is desired to help youth to help others and the Junior Red Cross is stressed. It is desired that boys be more manly and capable and the Boy Scout movement is given added pressure.

In chapter six desire was expressed to improve health, to fight plague and cholera and other contagious diseases. The modern school for training doctors was completed. Rats were killed, injections given, and vaccination administered. To eliminate quacks the registration of doctors and dentists is required. To win the masses of the people to modern health programs medical newspaper propaganda is regularly carried on. The educated desire fewer children and so birth control information is given. There is desire to supply every part of Siam with at least a minimum of modern medicine and so the junior doctor scheme is promulgated.

In chapter seven desire was expressed to open up the whole country to trade and modern ways of life. The railroad was built and a highway scheme is evolved to equip Siam with a network

of motor roads. It is desired to speed up and improve freight service and so new and necessary equipment is secured.

In chapter eight there is desire to abolish prostitution, or at least to control it better. A program of re-education, rescue, rehabilitation, and refuge is considered. The position of women is unsatisfactory and the desire is to bring the women up to the standards of the men. Education for all is offered, monogamy is encouraged, and the registration of marriage is required. Desire to lower the crime level is sought through education, better economic status, teaching criminals some practical trade, and by an efficient police force.

In chapter nine desire for pleasure and recreation is found in new sports and plays as well as in old fashioned ones. The old Siamese theatre is transformed to suit the times. There is desire to re-vitalize the artistic side of the Siamese along such lines as dancing, singing, wood carving, and writing. The Department of Fine Arts is made responsible for this side of life.

In the present chapter it is desired that the evil characteristics of greed, jealousy, revenge, anger, pride, and hate be weeded out and that people may be generous, loyal, merciful, and loving. It is desired to improve the status of the monk and so education is planned to give him new dignity. It is desired to educate the youth in ethical and moral matters and so special literature is prepared for that purpose. Some people retain a Buddhism wrapped up in tradition, custom, and miracle. They hope for heaven, fear hell, think wistfully of nirvana, and appease the spirit world. Some people seek a simple pure Buddhism with Buddha as the great teacher of the desired standards of ethics and morals. And some few, regardless of any religion in particular, study community values and ethics, and use the social and

religious sciences to achieve the goal.

To show more sharply the transition from the old way of life to the new the following contrasts are offered. The old had an absolute monarch but the new a constitutional government. The old required the drinking of the cup of loyalty to the king, but the new, even though retaining the old symbol, has drained the act of all significance and established a democratic ideal. The old way had taboos around the monarch but the new says that all men are equal. The old way required a special high language and the use of titles while the new uses one tongue for all and has abolished the giving of titles. The old way had ploughing and swing ceremony to assure good crops and proper rainfall while the new has a department of agriculture, soils studies, seed culture, and a weather bureau. The old way had a white elephant cult to demonstrate warlike power; tattooing was used as armor to ward off knife and bullet; and some say that human sacrifice was practiced for the manufacture of malignant spirits to guard the palace gates, but now there is an army and navy with tanks and gunboats. The old way had roots and herbs as medicines and hung charms on the body for health while the new has scientific medicine, inoculation, and vaccination. The old way guaranteed youth a successful adulthood by the topknot ceremony but the new depends on education and schools. The old way had plural marriage to give a tired wife a rest but the new has birth control. The old way had a temple school which consisted of a monk and a boy but the new has a modern school system. The old had the monk as the intelligentsia but the new has the university graduate and the student from abroad. The old way required learning by rote but the new is supplying books and libraries. The old way favored polygamy but the new favors monogamy. The old way had spirit

controls, lucky days, charms, and benevolent gods but the new has a reasonable Buddhism which resolves itself into peace and love; do good and receive good, do evil and receive evil.

Siam, religiously, is allowing the accumulated sediment of ages to gradually settle out of the life stream. The settling has begun at the top, or surface, where the better educated people live. The constitutional form of government has been a settling agent that has speeded up the process and will doubtless see the clearing of the religious stream to greater and greater depths.

The die has been cast. They can never turn back the pages of history. The people must make the best of a new world and prove it to see what it has to offer. It remains to be seen if the new way of life will yield the happiness of the old.

Summary of religious trends:

1. A trend to disbelieve in miracles, heaven, and hell.

2. A trend to interpret nirvana as a victorious life here and now.

3. A trend to question the value of the monks and the temples.

4. A trend to discard obsolete magical ceremonies or else to regard them as of purely social value.

5. A trend to give the monk a better and more specialized education.

6. A trend to stress religious education for the young.

7. A trend to increase the volume of religious literature.

8. A trend to rationalize Buddhism and to reconcile it with modern science.

9. A trend to return to pristine Buddhism while discarding the accretions of centuries of custom and tradition.

10. A trend to inculcate a new and martial spirit, a spirit of daring and endurance.